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Empires and local powers in Northwest Arabia: new insights into the political history of Dadan, Ḥegrā and Taymāʾ in the later 1st millennium BC

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Abstract

Based on the spectacular development of North-Arabian archaeology and epigraphy in the last ten years, this paper aims to revise the chronology of political powers in the Ḥijāz during the second half of the 1st millennium BC. To this end, it summarizes the epigraphic and archaeological evidence from the sites of the al-ʿUlā area (notably Dadan and Ḥegrā) and confronts it with the recently published data from the third main archaeological site in Northwest Arabia: Taymāʾ. This review of the evidence not only supports an early dating of the Lihyanite kingdom (late 6th – mid-3rd century BC?) and the hypothesis of a hitherto unknown Late Hellenistic polity based at Ḥegrā (mid-3rd – mid-1st century BC?), but it also leads to question the extent of Achaemenid and Lagid involvement in Northwest Arabia.